دراسات القرآن الكريم الاستشراقية

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ORIENTALIST STUDIES OF THE QUR'ÂN
A HISTORICAL SURVEY

I. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The orientalists' study of the Qur'ân takes place in the context of their broader study of Islam and Islamic history. As such, three things need to be borne in mind. First, the story of their study of the Qur'ân goes back to the beginning of orientalism itself in its proper sense. Second, the purpose and attitude that underlie their study of Islam also characterize their study and treatment of the Qur'ân. Third, although many of the orientalists deal especially with the Qur'ân, in general all those who deal with Islam and Islamic history speak about the Qur'ân in some form or other; for, no account of Islam and its history is possible without a reference to the Qur'ân and the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him. Often these latter type of studies highlight and summarise the pattern of the specialists' thinking about the Qur'ân current at the time; but sometimes they raise new points and issues that are in turn taken up by the specialists for verification and elaboration. The subject of the orientalists' study of the Qur'ân thus embraces both their specialist and particular treatment of the Qur'ân as well as their treatment of it in general works on Islam and Islamic history.(1) The scope and purpose of the present article, however, do not admit of any comprehensive survey of both these types of studies. Attention will therefore be focused mainly on specialist and particular studies, though accounts in the general works on Islam and Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) will be occasionally taken into consideration.

The story of the orientalist study of the Qur'ân falls into three

(1) A characteristic instance is P. K. Hitti's *History of the Arabs,* first published in 1927, wherein he devotes a chapter (Ch. IX) to the Qur'ân (titled "The Koran the Book of Allah") and draws a parallel between Qur'ânic passages and those from the Bible, in an attempt to support the favourite orientalist theory that the Qur'ân is based on Judaeo-Christian sources.

broad but unequal periods. The early period starts with the first Latin translation of the Qur’ân made in 1143 CE. and runs till roughly the end of the eighteenth century. The second or modern period covers the nineteenth and the first three quarters of the twentieth century; and the third and the latest period began from the mid-seventies of the twentieth century and is still holding sway today. Each of these periods has some landmarks in the progress of Qur’ânic studies that are indicated in italicised sub-headings.

II. The First Period and the Method of Translation-Refutation

(a) *The first Qur’ân translation and the beginning of orientalism*

Even before the launching of the Second Crusade, Christian thinkers realized the need for combating Islam on the intellectual level and forging what P. K. Hitti calls "an instrument of pacific crusade".(1) Foremost among such thinkers were the Archbishop Raymond of Toledo (1126-51) and Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny (d. 1157). The former was instrumental in establishing a school of translation at Toledo where important Arabic works on theology and science were translated, while the latter, Peter the Venerable, commissioned the first translation of the Qur’ân with the declared objective of refuting Islam. This translation was made in Latin and completed, as mentioned above, in 1143 by Robert Ketenensis of Chester, Hermann of Dalmatia and two other associates, assisted by an Arab Muslim. The initiatives taken by Archbishop Raymond and Peter the Venerable led ultimately to the establishment of the first School of Oriental Studies in Europe at Toledo in 1250, the College of Friars at Miramar in 1276 for the study of Arabic in which Raymond Lull of Catalania played an important part, and the resolution of the Council of Vienna in 1311 creating chairs of Arabic at the universities of Paris, Louvain and Salamanca.

As the objective of the translation of the Qur’ân was to defend Christianity and to "refute" Islam, Peter the Venerable had prepared a "Refutation of Islam" in Latin to accompany the translation. This

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(1) P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 6th edition, reprinted London, 1958, p. 663.

"Refutation" consisted of four parts dealing with (a) an account of the Jews' and the Christians' preservation of their sacred scriptures, (b) the life of Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), (c) the supposed absence of miracles in his life and (d) his claim to prophethood and the "innovations" he introduced. A manuscript of this first translation of the Qur'ân containing the autograph of the translator is preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris. Qualitatively it was not quite a translation but merely a paraphrasing of the passages of the Qur'ân with blatant mistakes and distortions. According to George Sale, a subsequent translator, "it deserves not the name of translation; the unaccountable liberties therein taken, and the numberless faults, both of omission and commission, leaving scarce any resemblance of the original."(1) Nevertheless this first Latin translation remained the sole or main source of information about the Qur'ân available to the Europeans for about five centuries.

(b) *Developments during the Renaissance and the Reformation: Role of Martin Luther*

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there was an intellectual awakening in Europe brought about by the Renaissance which was quickened by the advance of the Ottomans in Europe and the fall of Constantinople in their hands in 1453. This latter event led to the migration of many Greek scholars to Italy which in turn gave a further impetus to the Renaissance. In the context of these developments Christian thinkers once again turned their serious attention to the task of confronting Islam on the intellectual plane. This time the lead was taken by Juan Alfonso de Segobia (d. after 1456), a Professor of the University of Salamanca and a member of the Synod of Basel. Like Peter the Venerable he also undertook a project of combating Islam through a translation of the Qur'ân to be issued with a "refutation" of Islam. For this purpose he acquired the services of a Spanish Muslim who also knew Arabic, and with his help prepared a Latin Translation of the Qur'ân and himself prepared a book in refutation of Islam entitled, *De Mittenndo Gladio Spiritus in Sarracenes.* Both these works are, however, lost

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(1) George Sale, *The Koran etc.,* London, 1734, preface (To the Reader), p. V.

except that they are mentioned in later bibliographical compilations.[1]

The next stage in the development of European Qur'ânic studies was related with the Reformation Movement. In launching it Martin Luther (1483-1546) aimed not really to reform Christianity as such but to do away with the claims and pretensions of the Pope of Rome, raising the slogan: "Prove it from the Scriptures." Luther was equally alive to the danger of his movement developing into one for dismantling Christianity and paving the way for the spread of Islam in Europe. Hence he undertook, on the one hand, to translate the Bible into German in order to make it accessible to his people and, on the other, to find fault with Islam and to publish Peter the Venerable's "Refutation of Islam" together with the Latin Translation of the Qur'ân made at his instance. In this task, Luther was assisted and encouraged by Theodor Bibliander (1504-1564), a Swiss orientalist. Luther himself wrote an introduction to this Latin translation and it was published, together with Luther's introduction and Peter the Venerable's "Refutation", by Bibliander from Basel and Zürich between 1543 and 1550. Through his speeches also Luther made his followers aware of the "evil" of Islam, comparing Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) with the Pope as "slaves of Satan and enemies of Christ".[2] Conscious of the force and appeal of Islam, however, Luther warned himself as well as his fellow Christians as follows: "The abominable Muhammad almost became my Prophet, and both the Turks and Jews were on the way to sainthood... So take my advice, do not celebrate too soon. Watch out that your skill does not desert you. Be concerned, be humble, and pray that you may grow in this art and be protected against the crafty Devil."[3]

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(1) 'Abd al-Rahmân Badawî, *Mawsû'at al-Mustashriqîn*, Beirut, 1989, p. 26.

(2) Martin Luther, *Lectures* etc., quoted in M. Reeves, *Muhammad in Europe etc.*, London, 2000, p. 119.

(3) *Martin Luther's works*, tr. J. Pelican, St. Louis, 1958-1967, vol. 14, pp. 37-38, quoted in *ibid*., p. 127.

(c) *The first print of the Qur'ân – Burnt at the Pope's instance*
Appearance of translations in European national languages

It was also during this period of the Reformation that the full Arabic Qur'ân was printed for the first time in Venice about the year 1533; but all the copies were subsequently burned at the instance of the Pope.[(1)] The venture was doubtless facilitated by the invention of the art of printing in the previous century by the use of movable letters (types). Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, the orientalist Qur'ânic studies followed in general the pattern set by Peter the Venerable, namely, to issue translations of the Qur'ân together with "refutations" of it and of Islam. The main change in the field brought about by the Renaissance and the Reformation was that henceforth translations and "Refutations" started appearing in modern European languages along with Latin.

The way was in fact shown by Luther's German translation of the Bible. Thus Andrea Arrivabene made from the Latin translation or rather paraphrasing of Ketenensis's (Bibliander) an Italian version, *L' Alcorano di Macometto*, which was published in 1547; and from this Italian translation of the translation Solomon Schweigger made the first German translation, *Alcoranus Mahometicus*, published from Nuremberg in 1616; and from this German translation of the translation of the translation was prepared the first Dutch translation, *De Arabische Alkoran*, issued posthumously in 1641.

Shortly following this Dutch translation came the first French translation, *L' Alcoran de Mahomet*, made independently by André du Ryer, who had been French Consul General in Egypt, and was published from Paris in 1647. It was, however, no better than its predecessors, "there being mistakes in every page", as Sale observes, "besides frequent transpositions, omissions and additions, faults unpardonable in a work of

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(1) Mentioned by Thomas Erphenius (1584-1624) in his work on Arabic Grammar. See Badawî, *op. cit*., p. 302.

this nature."[1] Worse than this, du Ryer wrote an epistle to the reader by way of introduction in which he discussed what he conceived to be the "absurdities" of the Qur'ân, with the avowed objective "that the knowledge of what is contained in this Book, will render that Law contemptible."[2] And because of this objective of the work Alexander Ross made from it the first English translation which was published just two years afterwards, in 1649. Ross's objective and his adoption of du Ryer's translation are clearly stated in the title of the translation itself which runs as: *The Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated out of the Arabique into French by the Sieur du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and Resident for the King of France, at Alexandria. And newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities.* This English translation of Ross was still worse than the French original which he translated. To quote Sale again, Ross, "being utterly unacquainted with the Arabic, and no great master of the French, has added a number of fresh mistakes of his own to those of du Ryer, not to mention the meanness of his language..."[3] The French translation of du Ryer also fathered a version in Dutch by Glazemaker, published in 1658, another in German by Lange, published in 1688 and another in Russian by Postnikov and Veryovkin, all of which were printed several times throughout the seventeenth century and after.

Thus for more than five hundred years, from the middle of the 12th to the end of the 17th century, there were only two basic translations of the Qur'ân, the one in Latin by Robert Ketenensis (1143) and the other in French by du Ryer (1647) from which other translations were made into Italian, German, Dutch, English and Russian. Both these two basic translations and those that emanated from them are, by the admissions of subsequent orientalists themselves, not worth the name of translations and are grossly incorrect and faulty, being vitiated by omissions, commissions and transpositions. All these were also professedly aimed at

(1) Sale, *op.cit.*, p. VI.

(2) Translated by A. Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet* etc., London, 1649, p. A4.

(3) Sale, *op. cit.*, p. VI. See also similar remarks by Zwemer who calls Ross's translation "faulty in the extreme." See *The Moslem World*, 1927, p. 250.

refuting Islam and the Qur'ân, and as such, served the purpose of giving a distorted picture of both to the Europeans.

(d) *Attempt of the Congregatio de Propagatione Fidei of Rome to refute the Qur'ân Translation of Marracci and its offshoots*

The next notable step in the European Qur'ânic study was taken by the Congregatio de Propagatione Fidei of Rome which, under the direction of the Pope, prepared and published a Latin "refutation" of the Qur'ân in 1691 under the title: *Prodromus ad Refutationem Alcorani.* This was shortly afterwards republished along with the full Arabic text of the Qur'ân.[(1)] Almost simultaneously, in 1694, Abraham Hinckelmann published the full Qur'ân in Arabic from Hamburg in Germany in 1694. Copies of this print of the Qur'ân are preserved in some of the European libraries. More importantly, a new Latin Translation of the Qur'ân prepared by Ludovico Marracci was published from Padua in 1698. Marracci was a confessor to Pope Innocent XI and the work was dedicated to the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I. The professed aim of the work was the same as that of its predecessors, to refute and discredit Islam and the Qur'ân; but it differed from them in scope. It gave a translation together with the Arabic text. Second, it added explanatory notes and comments in two forms: in the translation of almost every *'âyah* explanatory notes were included in the body of the translation which more often than not distorted its meaning; and further comments for the same purpose were added as footnotes. These were also carefully selected from the unorthodox and faulty Arabic commentaries so as to give the worst possible impression of Islam. Third, the whole work was introduced by a companion volume entitled "Refutation of the Qur'ân".

Naturally this work was eagerly welcomed by the Christian enthusiasts and evangelists and it was translated as well as made the basis for further translations in a number of European languages. Thus, just five years after its publication, David Nerreter translated Marracci's translation into German which was published at Nuremberg in 1703. And in 1734 was published the famous English translation of George Sale

(1) Badawî, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

which was based on Marracci's work.[1] Like Marracci, Sale introduced his translation by *A Preliminary Discourse* on Islam and the Qur'ân. This Preliminary Discourse as well as the notes and comments were based on Marracci's work. Although Sale states that he made his translation directly from the original Arabic, he guardedly admits his indebtedness to Marracci in the introduction saying with reference to the latter's work thus: "This work, however, with all its faults, is very valuable, and I should be guilty of ingratitude, did I not acknowledge myself much obliged thereto; but still, being in Latin, it can be of no use to those who understand not that tongue."[2]

Sale's work proved very popular in Europe and the English speaking countries and it went through a number of reprints and editions throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. His Preliminary Discourse was also translated and published separately in several European languages. It was also translated into Arabic by the Protestant Christian Missionaries in Egypt and published under title: *Maqâlât fî al-Islâm*. Meanwhile Marracci's and Sale's translations were in turn translated into other European languages. For instance, in 1751 M. Savary made a French translation of Marracci's Latin translation under the title: *Le Coran, traduit de l'Arabe, accompagné de notes, etc.* The title page of one edition of this work states that it was published in Makka in 1165 H.[3] The claim is evidently false and it was made no doubt to impress its authenticity on the readers. The work proved, however, almost as popular as that of Sale's and it went through several editions and reprints at Paris, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and London by various publishers. Equally popular proved to be another French

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(1) George Sale, *The Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammad, Translated into English immediately from the original Arabic; with Explanatory Notes, taken from the most approved Commentators. To which is prefixed A Preliminary Discourse*, London, 1734.

(2) *Ibid*., pp. vi-vii.

(3) J. D. Pearson, "Bibliography of Translations of the Qur'ân into European languages", *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1975, Appendix, p. 505.

translation made by M. Kasimriski, which was based on Sale's translation and published in Paris for the first time in 1840. In short, throughout the eighteenth and the greater part of the nineteenth centuries translations of the Qur'ân in various European languages emanated from the Latin translation of Marracci and its alter-ego the English translation of George Sale.

II. The Modern Period: Changed Tactics To Assail the Qur'ân

(a) *European imperial expansion and a new phase of Qur'ânic studies*

Sale's translation and *Preliminary Discourse* marked the apogee of the pattern of translation-refutation set in motion by Peter the Venerable. The rest of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century marked a transition to the second period of the orientalist Qur'ânic studies. During this transition period and also afterwards various Marracci-Sale based and independent translations of the Qur'ân were of course issued;(1) but the world situation was changing completely which called for new approaches to Qur'ânic studies. By the middle of the nineteenth century the European nations had established their imperial dominion over a number of Asian and African countries, mostly Muslim lands, and had come into closer contact with their Muslim populations. This imperial expansion gave rise to new hopes for christianizing the conquered peoples and led to the establishment of a number of Christian missionary societies in Europe. These missionary societies, aided and encouraged directly and indirectly by the imperial administrators, conducted their activities in the conquered lands in a very extensive and systematic manner. These were intellectually supported by a new phase of orientalism. In fact many of the new generation of orientalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came from among the ranks of the missionaries and imperial administrators.

The imperial expansion also made the classical Arabic and Islamic works more easily accessible to European scholars. The changed

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(1) See for a critical review of the orientalist translations of the Qur'ân M. M. Ali, *The Qur'ân and the Orientalists*, Ipswich, 2004, pp. 323-352.

situation led to a change in technique and approach. Hitherto translations of the Qur'ân and the orientalist writings in general had been meant essentially for European readers and the main purpose was to prevent the Europeans from being influenced by Islam. Now such writings were to be directed to the Muslims and other conquered peoples. Hence it became necessary to abandon the previous practice of open declaration of hostility to Islam and the adoption of at least a show of objectivity and impartiality. Also, it was essential to attack Islam not with a superficial knowledge of it but with a deeper and more thorough understanding of it. Such understanding was needed also for successfully administering the imperial dominions. This need for understanding better the history and customs of the Asians in general and the Muslims in particular led to the formation of specialist learned societies like the Asiatic Society of Bengal, formed in 1784, Société Asiatique of Paris, formed in 1822, Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, formed in 1824 and the American Oriental Society, formed in 1842. These societies published learned and specialist journals as well as monographs touching the history, geography, cultures and religions of Asia.

All these developments led to a widening of the scope of Qur'ânic studies from merely its translations and "refutations" to the study of its history, language and text, the nature of Qur'ânic revelations, its exegeses, teachings, the supposed sources of it and of Islam, etc. Henceforth one constant argument advanced by the orientalists was that the Qur'ân and for that matter Islam was made up of ideas and precepts borrowed from Judaism and Christianity. The theory of Jewish origin of the Qur'ân and of Islam was first systematically advanced by Abraham Geiger in 1833 in his work *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthem aufgenommen?*(1) Thenceforth the theme was expanded into a Judaeo-Christian origin by others, particularly in works dealing with the life of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). It is to be noted that the titles of works of this nature did not show themselves to relate to Qur'ânic studies; but they very much dealt with the subject of the Qur'ân.

(1) Published from Bonn, 1833.

The misunderstandings and prejudices produced by the previous orientalist writings continued, however, to influence European concept about the Qur'ân and Islam. In fact the new trend in the Qur'ânic studies attempted only to justify and perpetuate the old misconceptions. A characteristic instance of the continuance of such prejudices is provided by Thomas Carlyle who, while advocating in 1841 the "sincerity" of the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) gave vent to the age-old bias against the Qur'ân saying that "it is a wearisome confused jumble, crude, incondite; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement; most crude, incondite; insupportable stupidity, in short."(1) Two years afterwards, in 1843, was published E. W. Lane's *Selections from the Qur'ân with an Interwoven Commentary.*(2) It was not quite a departure from the previous pattern of issuing translations with "refutations" and notes. Before the close of the first half of the nineteenth century, however, the printing of the Qur'ân was well under way. In 1831 it was printed in Calcutta (Kolkata), Bengal, with the help of a new kind of types which became very popular in the south Asian subcontinent. Three years subsequently, in 1834, Gustav Fluegel had the Qur'ân printed in Europe which came to be used by the orientalists and other researchers.

(b) *The pattern set by Sprenger-Muir-Nöldeke*

Early in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, more serious studies about the Qur'ân started appearing. The lead was given by the German scholar Aloys Sprenger who was appointed principal of the Calcutta Madrasa in 1850 by the English East India Company's administration in Bengal to de-Islamize the courses of studies in that institution. In the course of his work he came in contact with a number of classical Arabic works including Al-Suyûtî's *al-Itqân fî 'ulûm al-Qur'ân*. This work contains a chapter on the naturalized Arabic words in the Qur'ân,(3) which is a summary

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(1) T. Carlyle, *On Heros, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History,* 1841, reprinted New York, 1900, p. 63, quoted in E. Said, *Orientalism,* Penguin edition, 1985, p. 152.

(2) Published by James Maden, London, 1843.

(3) See al-Suyûtî, *Al-Itqân etc.*, vol. I, Riyadh, 1407/1987, pp. 366-380.

of an independent work by him on the subject entitled *al-Muhadhdhab fî mâ waqa'a fî al-Qur'ân min al-Mu'arrab* (A revised presentation of what occurs in the Qur'ân of Arabicized words). On the basis of this information Sprenger penned an article entitled "Foreign words occurring in the Qur'ân" which was published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1852.(1) The treatment was sketchy but Sprenger dwelt on the theme of the Prophet's supposed authorship of the Qur'ân and remarked that he used to make a parade of these foreign terms and a number of other peculiar expressions. This article of Sprenger's appears to be the first treatment of a particular Qur'ânic topic published in a specialized journal. It also paved the way for the treatment of the subject in a more elaborate way by subsequent scholars.

Sprenger was in fact engaged at that time in preparing a work on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in which he dealt elaborately with the Qur'ân. He and another official of the English East India Company, William Muir, had strong evangelical sympathies and both were in close touch with the well-known Protestant Christian Missionary Carl Gottaleb Pfander who was then engaged in missionary activities in Bengal and northern India. Pfander's activities ushered in a new era of Muslim-Christian debates which culminated in the famous Agra debate of 1854 between him and Rahmat Allah Kairânawî.(2) Both Sprenger and Muir were inspired and encouraged by Pfander to write about the life of the Prophet and the Qur'ân. Muir specifically acknowledges in the preface to the first edition of his work, *Life of Mahomet etc.,* that he wrote it "at the instance" of Pfander. It was published in four volumes between 1858 and 1861. Sprenger's work, *Life of Mohammed from Original Sources,* was published in Allahabad in 1851. His larger and more elaborate work on the same subject in three volumes written in German entitled *Das Leben und die Lehre des*

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(1) *J.A.S.B.*, 1852, pp. 109-114.

(2) See A. A. Powell, "Mawlânâ Rahmat Allah Kairânawî and Muslim-Christian controversy in India in the mid-nineteenth century", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, No. 1, 1976, pp. 45-58; also, M. M. Ali, *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, vol. II, Riyadh, 1988, pp. 227-233.

Mohammads was published from Berlin between 1861-1865. Both the scholars dealt rather extensively with the Qur'ân, its composition, style and history and the nature of Qur'ânic *wahy*, attempting mainly to substantiate the theory of the Prophet's supposed authorship of the Qur'ân and his borrowings from Judaism and Christianity.

It was also about this time that another scholar who became more famous in the field of Qur'ânic studies was emerging on the scene. He was Theodore Nöldeke (1836-1931) of Germany. In 1856 he obtained the degree of Ph.D. by writing a thesis in Latin on "the History of the Qur'ân". In 1858 the Paris Academy announced a prize for the best research monograph on the same subject. Among others, A. Sprenger, T. Nöldeke and A. Amari (of Italy) participated in the competition and the three jointly received the award, its value being doubled for dividing it among them. Most of what Sprenger wrote on the subject was incorporated in his *Das Leben etc.* Nöldeke translated and enlarged his Latin essay into German and published it in 1860 under title *Geschichte des Qorans.*(1) Amari's essay was translated into French under title *Memoire sur la Chronologie du Coran* (Chronological Arrangement of the Qur'ân).

Of all these works, Nöldeke's *Geschichte etc.* proved to be the most successful in influencing subsequent orientalist studies on the subject. In fact, it may be said that all the orientalist works that subsequently appeared on the Qur'ân till the middle of the twentieth century were in some form or other elaborations and extensions of Nöldeke's ideas and assumptions. It is therefore worthwhile to indicate here briefly his main lines of approach.(2)

Taking his cue from the basic facts of the gradual revelation of the Qur'ânic, the composition of the *sûrahs* by a combination of the passages

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(1) Subsequently Nöldeke further enlarged the work into two volumes (Leipzig, 1909-1910) with the assistance of his student Schwally.

(2) A good summary of his ideas and assumptions is given by Nöldeke himself in his article on the Qur'ân published in the 9th edition (1891) of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, pp. 597 ff.; also reproduced in Ibn Warraq (ed), *The Origins of the Koran Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book*, Prometheus Books, New York, 1998, pp. 36-63.

received at different times and the "occasions" of revelations as narrated in the Muslim sources Nöldeke attempted to identify the dates of the Qur'ânic passages as well as of the *sûrahs.* In the process he discussed what he conceived to be the Judaeo-Christian origins of the Qur'ân, the nature of the Qur'ânic *wahy*, the nature and character of the Prophet and the literary merit of the Qur'ân, reflecting and reiterating more or less the same views as those of the other orientalists like George Sale, Aloys Sprenger and W. Muir. Nöldeke also dealt with the "collection" and publication of the entire Qur'ân during the times of 'Abû Bakr and 'Uthmân.

In tracing the dates of the Qur'ânic passages (apart from the *sûrahs*) Nöldeke does not in most cases follow the "occasions" of revelations given in the Muslim sources but proceeds on two main assumptions, namely, (a) that many of the long *sûrahs* are the result of an amalgamation of various originally distinct revelations and, (b) the supposed differences in the literary style, "abrupt" changes in the subject matter and interruption in the connection of thought. On the basis of these two assumptions he severs out many pieces of long *sûrahs* as originally independent, assigning them supposed dates. His object in doing so is to show that the Qur'ân is, as he sees it, a patchwork of incoherent themes and episodes.

He follows more or less the same logic in tracing the chronological order of the *sûrahs*. Thus, he divides the *sûrahs* into four periods, the early Makkan, the mid-Makkan, the late Makkan and the Madinan, fixing the chronological order of each group according to the length, theme, literary style and what he conceived to be the "convulsive excitement" of the early group, the gradual diminishing of the glow and fervour of the middle and late Makkan groups and the "prosaic" tone of the Madinan group of *sûrahs*, using as far as it suits his purpose the known "occasions" of revelations. Needless to say that his chronological order of the *sûrahs* differs considerably from that given by the Muslim sources.

As regards the collection and publication of the Qur'ân under 'Abû Bakr and 'Uthmân Nöldeke's main assumptions are that Zayd ibn Thâbit collected the texts, "edited/redacted" them, combined the many originally independent passages into *sûrahs* and arranged them in the present order;

and that nonetheless the Qur'ân is not complete. He also spoke about the literary style of the Qur'ân and of the "foreign" words in it, reiterating Sprenger's view that the Prophet made a show of his knowledge of these words.

These views of Nöldeke are faulty in many respects. Specially he is wrong in supposing that Zayd ibn Thâbit collected the many disjointed passages into *sûrahs* or "edited/redacted" them and that the Qur'ân is nonetheless incomplete. The chronological order given by him to the passages and *sûrahs* is not agreed to by the other orientalists themselves. Even his contemporary Muir gives a different order for the *sûrahs.* All these are essentially guess-work and suppositions.(1)

(c) *Extensions of Nöldeke's assumptions*

Nevertheless, the fashion thus set for determining the chronology of the *sûrahs* and passages of the Qur'ân, led the Rev. J. M. Rodwell to publish in 1861 his *The Koran: Translated from the Arabic, the sûrahs arranged in Chronological Order, with Notes and Index*. In a rather lengthy preface Rodwell discusses the rise of Islam and of the Qur'ân and refers his readers to the works of Sprenger and Muir, and also reproduces their views about the Qur'ânic *wahy* and their theory of the Qur'ân and Islam being an amalgam of bits from Judaism and Christianity.(2) The Prophet of Islam produced a doctrine, Rodwell wrote, which is "Judaism divested of its Mosaic ceremonial, and Christianity divested of its Atonement and the Trinity." In a footnote to this statement he advised his fellow-Christian missionaries saying: "A line of argument to be adopted by a Christian Missionary in dealing with a Mohammedan should be, not to attack Islam as a mass of error, but to show that it contains fragments of disjointed truth – that it is based upon Christianity and Judaism partially understood – especially the latter, without any appreciation of its typical character, pointing to Christianity as a final

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(1) See for a critical discussion of Nöldeke's assumptions M. M. Ali, *The Qur'ân and the Orientalists An Examination of their Main Theories and Assumptions,* Ipswich, 2004, pp. 205-217.

(2) Rodwell, *The Koran, etc.*, London, 1861, preface, p. xxv.

dispensation."[1]

Amidst this monotony of studied onslaughts on the Qur'ân, at least one Christian author of the time raised a voice of reason and dissent. He was John Davenport whose work, *An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran,* was published in 1869.[2] It consisted of vi+182 pages, divided into four chapters entitled: I. *Mohammed: A Biography*; II. *The Koran and its Morality*; III. *Charges against Mohammed Refuted* and IV. *Beauties of the Koran.*

Meanwhile the lines indicated by Sprenger, Muir and Nöldeke were followed by other scholars. Thus in 1880 S. Fraenkel published a study of the "foreign vocabulary" in ancient Arabic poetry and the Qur'ân in his *De vocabulis in antiquis Arabum carminibus et in Corano pregrinis*.[3] And in 1882-1884 the Rev. E. M. Wherry incorporated the ideas of Sale, Muir and Nöldeke in an enlarged edition of Sale's translation in 4 volumes entitled *A Comprehensive commentary of the Qur'ân comprising Sale's translation and preliminary discourse, with additional notes and emendations, together with a complete index to the text, preliminary discourse and notes.*[4] Another work relating to the Qur'ânic vocabulary was done by C. C. Torrey under title *The Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran,* which was published in Leiden in 1892. Before the century was over two other works were published which reiterated the theory of Judaeo-Christian origins of the Qur'ân and Islam. The one was written by Muir with avowed evangelical purpose and was entitled *The Qur'ân: Its Composition and Teaching and the Testimony it bears to the Holy Scriptures.* It was published in 1897. And in the following year (1898) the missionary circles published from Madras, India, an English and revised version of Abraham Gieger's work under title *Judaism and Islam*.

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(1) *Ibid*., p. xxii.

(2) Published by J. Davy and Sons, Long Acre, London, 1869.

(3) Published in Leiden, 1880.

(4) In 4 volumes, published by Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, London, and Houghton Miffin, Boston, 1882-1884.

The twentieth century started with a further extension of the Muir-Nöldeke approach of tracing the origins of the Qur'ân. Thus in 1901 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in London published the Church Missionary Society's the Rev. W. St. Clair Tisdall's *The Sources of Islam*. William Muir himself wrote a "Foreword" for it exultantly remarking: "Now if it can be shown that much of this grand book [Qur'ân] can be traced to human sources existing daily around the Prophet, then Islam falls to the ground. And this is what the author proves with marvellous power and erudition." Muir also suggested that the book "should be translated into Arabic, Urdu and other languages of the East, and so made accessible to Muslim readers everywhere."(1) Tisdall had been engaged in missionary activities in Persia and he had written the original of his work in Persian. The book is divided into six chapters in which he discusses, respectively, what he supposes to be (i) the Muslim view of the sources of Islam, (ii) the borrowings from the doctrines and practices of the Arabs of the "days of ignorance", (iii) the borrowings from the doctrines and histories of the Jews and the Sabaeans, (iv) the borrowings from the "tales of the heretical Christian sects", (v) the borrowings from the Zoroastrian and Hindu beliefs and (vi) the influence of the *hanîfs*. Needless to say, this work of Tisdall is beset with much prejudice, misconception and misunderstanding of the Qur'ân. The height of prejudice is the attempt to relate the Qur'ânic teachings to the doctrines of Hinduism and polytheism which the Qur'ân relentlessly denounces. It is strange that this Christian missionary turns a blind eye to the striking similarity between the Christian doctrines of incarnation of God and the Trinity on the one hand, and the Hindu doctrine of incarnation of God and the concept of *Tri-Deva*, a sort of trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, on the other. Tisdall's book was reissued with modifications in 1905 under the title *The Original Sources of the Qur'ân.*

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(1) The work together with the foreword are reproduced in Ibn Warraq (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 227-192. The above quotations are at pp. 227 and 230.

The hunt for the "sources" of the Qur'ân became almost a fashion and in the year following the publication of Claire Tisdall's *Sources of Islam,* i.e., in 1902, there appeared the *New Researches into the Composition of the Koran* by H. Herschfeld, which was published by the University of London Press. It did not really open up any new ground and trod mainly on the beaten track. Another work on the supposed source of the Qur'ân was prepared in French by Cl. Huart entitled *Une nouvelle source du Qoran* (A New Source of the Qur'ân) which was published in 1904. Almost similar in nature, but following more the foot-steps of Nöldeke, was E. Sell's *The Historical Development of the Qoran* published in 1905. Another work touching the supposed "sources" of the Qur'ân but more academic in nature was Robert Roberts' *The Social Laws of the Qorân Considered , and Compared with those of the Hebrew and other Ancient Sources.* It was originally written in German as a Ph. D. thesis early in the twentieth century and submitted to the Leipzig University; but was subsequently translated into English and published for the first time in 1925. It deals with such matters as marital relations, slavery, inheritance, charities, criminal offences, trade and commerce and food, the author's plan being, as stated in the preface, to trace the Prophet's "enactments where possible to their sources". In the notice on the jacket of the book it is further stated: "Muhammad... appeared as a social reformer as well, and ... allowance must necessarily be made for the debt which Islamic laws owe to those found in the Old Testament and Talmudic literature."

The ideas and assumptions transmitted through the above mentioned publications percolated into general works published at the time on Islam and Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). A characteristic instance is the Oxford Professor David Samuel Margoliouth's *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam,* the third edition of which appeared in 1905. It reproduces principally the views of Sprenger, Muir and Nöldeke

about the Qur’ân and the Qur’ânic *wahy* with much offensive disparagement. More significantly, it was about this time that the Italian orientalist Prince Leon Caetani’s monumental work, *Annalli dell’ Islam*, began to appear. Its first volume was published in 1904 in Milan, and its tenth and final volume came out in 1926. In its seventh volume Caetani dealt elaborately with the Qur’ân. Discussing the views, among others, of Nöldeke and building upon his conclusions Caetani drove at three assumptions, namely, (a) that the Qur’ân does not represent the very words (*ipissima verba*) of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), (b) that the tradition about the first collection (Caetani uses the expression *recencio* = recension, a critical revision of a text) of the Qur’ân during the time of Abû Bakr (رضي الله عنه) is a myth and (c) that the *recencio* during ‘Uthmân’s (رضي الله عنه) time was undertaken more for political than for religious motives. A summarised English translation of these views was published shortly afterwards in *The Moslem World* in 1915.(1) It needs to be pointed out that Caetani is very much wrong in these assumptions. He betrays the misconception of the orientalists in general that the Qur’ân is made up of the Prophet’s *verba* (words).

Meanwhile Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), whose work, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Studies on Islam) in two volumes and published from Halle in 1889-1890 had established him as an authority on the history of the *hadîth* literature(2), turned his attention to Qur’ânic studies. In 1910 the first volume of his lectures on Islam was published. In this volume he discussed, among other things, the concept of "Predestination and Free will" in the Qur’ân. And in the second volume of this work, which was published in 1920, he dealt elaborately with the history and development of Qur’ân commentaries (*tafâsîr*).

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(1) Vol. 5, pp. 380-390.

(2) Godziher discusses the *hadîth* literature in the second volume of his work.

(d) *Further extensions of Nöldeke's assumptions*

The Torrey-Bergsträsser hunt for variant texts

Goldziher's work on the Qur'ân commentaries in fact reflected a new trend in the orientalist studies on the Qur'ân. By the beginning of the twentieth century the classical Arabic works including the commentaries of the Qur'ân became accessible to the orientalists. Many of the commentators note the variations in the vocalization (*qirâ'ât*) of a number of words and expressions in the Qur'ân. These variations – some of which have their origin in the dialectical differences of Arabic in morphology, syntax, vocabulary and phonology – were part of the Qur'ânic revelation as indicated by the *hadîth*, "The Qur'an has been revealed according to seven types of variations"(1). The variant readings are recorded in all standard works of *tafsîr*. The *qurrâ'* (the Qur'ân reciters) all over the world recite the different variants of each *âyah*. Educated Muslims, thus, have always been aware of these variations. On learning of these variant readings the orientalists, however, conjured up the existence of different and various texts of the Qur'ân and enthusiastically took up the point to assail the authenticity of the Qur'ân and to prove that the text universally used by the Muslims is not the only text of it but that there exist other different texts.

The earliest notable work in this respect was *Leaves from Three Ancient Qurâns Possibly Pre-'Othmanic with a List of their variants*, edited by Rev. Alphonso Mingana and Agnes Smith Lewis and published in Cambridge in 1914. The work does not really concern *three ancient Qurâns*, as claimed, but only select texts taken from different commentaries focusing on the variant readings of some words and expressions. Mingana followed it up by an article entitled "The Transmission of the Koran", published in 1916, in which he copiously drew on the writings of Paul Casanova, Nöldeke, St. Clair Tisdall and D. S. Margoliouth to cast doubts on the history of the compilation and publication of the Qur'ân during the times of 'Abû Bakr and 'Uthmân (رضي الله عنهما).(2) Two years afterwards appeared the tenth volume of the *Encylopedia of Religion and Ethics.*(3) The article on the Qur'ân in it was jointly written by Margoliouth and Mingana. The former summarised his

(1) Reported by Bukhari and Muslim.

(2) First published in *The Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society*, and republished in *The Moslem World*, vol. VII, 1917, pp. 223-232, 402-414.

(3) It was edited by J. Hastings and published by T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1918.

views as contained in his *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, dealing particularly with what he thought to be the "sources" of the Qur'ân, the theory of revelation, and chronology and arrangement of the text; and the latter, Mingana, focused his main attention on what he called "editions and various readings".(1) A few years subsequently, Mingana authored another work entitled *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Koran* which was published by the Manchester University Press in 1927.

It was soon realized that a study of the "readings" as noted by the Muslim scholars involved also a study of Qur'ânic vocabulary. Once again, therefore, the orientalists found themselves drawn into a consideration of what seemed to them unusual and "foreign" words in the Qur'ân. The result was the appearance in 1926 of the then Frankfort University Professor Joseph Horovitz's (1874-1931) *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Qur'ânic Researches). In it he attempted a detailed analysis of the Qur'ânic language, using pre-Islamic poetry to understand the words and expressions in the Qur'ân. The work was bedevilled, however, by much exaggeration and errors so much so that it did not receive the approval even of the orientalists themselves. The same urge led Arthur Jeffery to write a thesis on "The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân" which he completed in the same year (1926).(2) Almost simultaneously he began the work of identifying and collecting the "variant readings" of the Qur'ân. At the same time, the Munich university Professor G. Bergsträsser was working on a similar project and the first fascicule of his *Geschichte des Qorantexts* was published in that very year (1926). The publication of this work led Jeffery to meet Bergsträsser at Munich and they "agreed to collaborate on a much bigger plan", as Jeffery writes, "of assembling all the material that would assist in some day making it possible to elucidate the history of the text." Jeffery was to go on with his task of collecting the variants and preparing an edition of the text, while Bergsträsser was to commence gathering material for an archive of photographs of all the oldest Kufic manuscripts of the Koran, a collation of which he hoped would "throw much light on

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(1) *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. X, pp. 538-550.
(2) It was subsequently published from Baroda, India, in 1938.

the history of the text." Then they were to pool their "resources with a view to a large volume dealing with the variants."[1]

Accordingly, Bergsträsser concentrated on collecting the photographs of available Kûfic manuscripts of the Qur'ân and Jeffery worked on the collection of the "variant readings". The publication in 1927 of Ibn al-Jazarî's *Kitâb al-Nashr fî al-Qirâ'at al-'Ashr* at Damascus in two volumes gave a fillip to their plan. In 1928 Bergsträsser visited Cairo and made a collection of Kûfic manuscripts of the Qur'ân along with a search for works on Qur'ânic "readings". He also visited Istanbul and made further photocopies of Qur'ân manuscripts. Meanwhile his student Dr. Otto Pretzl edited 'Abû 'Amr al-Dânî's *Taysîr* and *al-Muqni'*, two important works on *qirâ'ât*, which were published respectively in 1930 and 1932. About the same time Jeffery discovered at Damascus two manuscripts of Ibn 'Abî Dâwûd's (d. 316 H.) *Kitâb al-Masâhif*. In 1933 Professor Bergstässer died of an accident; but his work of collecting photocopies of Qur'ânic manuscripts was continued by his students Dr. Pretzl, Antony Spitaler, and A. Fischer. Pretzl also finished the third fascicule of Bergsträsser's *Geschichte des Qorantexts.*

The plan of editing a text of the Qur'ân with an indication of the variant readings did not materialize. The upshot was the publication by Jeffery of his *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ân: The Old Codices - The Kitâb al-Masâhif of Ibn Abî Dâud together with a Collection of the variant Readings from the Codices of Ibn Mas'ûd, Ubai, 'Alî, Ibn 'Abbâs, Anas, Abû Mûsâ and other Early Qur'ânic authorities which represent a Type of Text Anterior to that of the canonical Text of 'Uthmân*.[2] It is to be pointed out that the title given by Jeffery to his work is misleading in two main respects. First, it tends to give the impression that the "variant readings" noted are taken from the "codices" of the persons mentioned, while the fact is that "the variant readings" recorded are not from the "codices" as such but from what is reported by others, the exegetes and lexicographers, as having come down from the codices mentioned. Second, the concluding part of the

(1) A. Jeffery, "Progress of the Study of the Koran Text", *The Moslem World,* vol. 25, 1935, pp. 4-16, reproduced in Ibn Warraq, *op. cit.,* p. 141.

(2) Printed for the Trustees of the "De Goeje Fund" by E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1937.

title, namely, that the variant readings noted "represent a type of text *anterior* to that of the canonical text of ‘Uthmân" is grossly misleading. The persons of whose codices are mentioned by Jeffrey were all Companions of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, and were contemporaries of one another and of Zayd ibn Thâbit who himself had one copy of the text of the Qur’ân and who was one of those in charge of making what is called the "canonical text of ‘Uthmân". ‘Uthmân himself was a senior contemporary of all these persons and they were all alive at the time of making the compilation under him. The "codices" of the persons mentioned were and could only be contemporary with the codices of Zayd and others of the Prophet’s Companions. They were copies of the same text as given out by the Prophet and by no means "anterior" or posterior to one another. The different codices or copies were made simultaneously by the Prophet’s Companions and were in no way different texts of the Qur’ân, though they differed in respect of completeness. In fact, even according to Jeffery’s own admission, the "variant readings" concern only a number words and expressions in the Qur’ân and they do by no means show the existence of "different" texts of the Qur’ân. More importantly, Jeffery notes that different lexicographers and commentators give different "readings" for the same word, though each traces the "reading" of that word to the same codex! Jeffery’s work consists of two parts. The first part is an Introduction containing the list of "variant readings" as gleaned from a number of exegeses and lexicographical works; and the second part consists of an edition of Ibn ’Abi Dâwûd’s *Kitâb al-Masâhif.*

The other part of the Bergsträsser-Jeffery plan, that of finding out differences in the Qur’ânic text by comparing its extant manuscripts, did not also lead to any encouraging results. Before the commencement of the Second World War and the consequent destruction by bombing of the photocopies of the Qur’ânic manuscripts collected at the Munich University, the scholars and authorities in charge of these had completed a preliminary study and survey and issued a statement saying that their study and comparison of the various manuscripts had not revealed any discrepancy and difference in the texts except minor difference in spelling in some places which was natural and all of which did not affect the correctness and integrity of the Qur’ânic texts as a whole.(1)

(1) See Muhammad Hamidullah, *Khutabât-i-Bhawalpur* (Urdu text), Tahqîqât-i-Islâmî, =

Simultaneously with the Bergsträsser-Jeffery quest for variance in the Qur'ânic texts the theory of Judaeo-Christian origins and the assumptions of Sprenger-Nöldeke-Muir about the Qur'ân and Qur'ânic *wahy* continued to be reiterated and developed. Thus in 1922 there appeared in Stuttgart Wilhelm Rudolph's *Abhangigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Die Christentum*. And in 1926, which witnessed the completion of Jeffery's thesis on the "Foreign vocabulary etc.", and the publication of the first fascicule of Bergsträsser's *Geschischte des Qorantexts* and Horovitz's Qur'ânic researches, there appeared in London the Rev. Richard Bell's *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment* and at Stockholm Tor Andre's *Der Ursprung des Islams und des Christentum*.(1) This was followed by the publication in 1930 of a rather lengthy article by Karl Ahrens on the same subject entitled "*Christliches in Qoran*".(2) And as if to mark the centenary of Abraham Geiger's work, C. C. Torrey had his work, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, published from New York in 1933.(3) The same thesis was restated in A. I. Katsh's *Judaism in Islam* which appeared in 1954.(4)

(e) *The Bell-Watt Speculations*

Meanwhile Richard Bell built upon the Sprenger-Muir-Nöldeke assumptions. Working on the assumptions of Nöldeke and Rodwell, he carried out a rearrangement of the *sûrahs* and issued a translation of the Qur'ân in two volumes under title *The Qur'ân: Translation with a Critical Rearrangement of the Sûrahs.* These were published in 1937-39 from Edinburgh. His arrangement of the *sûrahs*, however, differed from that of Rodwell. At the same time Bell worked on the nature of Qur'ânic *wahy* and the theory of "revision" of its text by the Prophet as suggested by Nöldeke and Rodwell. Bell first put forth his assumptions in a series of two articles in two issues of *The Moslem World* for 1934 under

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Islamabad, 1985, pp. 20-21, reproduced By. M. M. A'zamî in the *Impact International*, March, 200, p. 28.

(1) A French translation of the work was published at Paris in 1955 under the title: *Les Origines de l'Islam et le Christianisme.*

(2) *ZDMG* (*Zeitischrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft*), 1930, pp. 15-68, 148-190.

(3) Republished in 1967.

(4) New York, 1954.

captions "Mohammed's call" and "Mohammed's visions".(1) These were followed by two more articles published in the *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* for 1949 and 1951. The two articles were captioned respectively, "The Beginning of Muhammad's Religious Activity" and "The Style of the Qur'ân".(2) In the meantime R. Blachère published in 1947 his *Introduction au Coran*.(3) Blachère generally reflects the pattern of orientalist thinking of the time regarding the Qur'ân and does not break much new ground. Almost in imitation of this latter work, however, Bell prepared his *Introduction to the Qur'ân* which was published from Edinburgh in 1953.(4) In it he consolidated his views and dealt mainly with three themes, namely, the dating and characterization of the Qur'ânic passages, the nature of Qur'ânic *wahy* and the theory of "revision".

Building upon the suggestion of Nöldeke and working on two basic but erroneous assumptions that (a) the normal unit of revelation was a short passage and (b) that the Prophet "revised" the texts before combining them into *sûrahs*, Bell classifies the Qur'ânic passages into various types, calling them the "sign" type, the "slogan" type, the "soothsayer" type, etc. He also assigns as many as ten different dates to the passages, such as "very early", "early Meccan", "Meccan", "late Meccan", "connected with Badr", "connected with Uhud", etc. Needless to point out that his dating is as conjectural and untenable as that of Nöldeke's and is similarly not accepted by all orientalists.

As regards Qur'ânic *wahy*, Bell stresses six assumptions, namely, (a) that the tradition regarding the coming of *wahy* are inventions of a later age and are founded upon the Qur'ânic passage 53:1-8; (b) that before he "encountered" the "visions" in the above mentioned passage the Prophet had been "speaking" in some manner but had not started delivering the Qur'ân; (c) that the term *wahy* does not mean verbal communication of the text of

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(1) *The Moslem World*, January 1934, pp. 13-19 and April, 1934, pp. 145-154.

(2) See the *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society,* vols. VIII and XI, pp. 16-24 and 9-15 respectively.

(3) Published from Paris. He also produced a new French translation of the Qur'ân, *Le Coran. Traduction Nouvele,* Paris, 1947-50.

(4) Bell also prepared *A Commentary on the Qur'ân* which was subsequently edited by C.E. Bosworth and M. E. J. Richardson and published by the University of Manchester in 2 vols. in 1991.

the Qur'ân but "suggestions", "prompting" or "inspiration" to "compose" the Qur'ân; (d) that according to the passage 53:1-8 the Prophet claimed to have seen Allah; (e) that as he subsequently became aware of the existence of angels he reasserted in *sûrah* 81 (*al-Takwîr*) that he had seen the angel messenger on the clear horizon and, (f) that still more subsequently, at Madina, he introduced Jibrîl as the conveyer of *wahy.* It is to be pointed out that with the exception of the assumptions (a) and (c), the other assumptions are merely repetitions of those of the previous orientalists, specially of Muir and Margoliouth. All the assumptions are, however, wrong and untenable.

As regards the theory of "revision" Bell not only enlarges on what Nöldeke and Rodwell suppose to be changes in rhymes and subject matters but adds a new assumption that the Prophet used to write the supposed revision on the opposite side of the material on which the original revelation was written! He also harps on the subject of *naskh* (abrogation).

Bell's assumptions and theories were further enlarged by his pupil W. Montgomery Watt. He made his debut in the field of Qur'ânic study by his thesis on *Freewill and Predestination in Early Islam* which was published in London in 1948. This was the second detailed discussion on the subject by an orientalist after Ignaz Goldziher's treatment of it in 1910.(1) Watt's major discussions on the Qur'ân, however, are contained in his *Muhammad at Mecca*, published in 1953. In it he incorporated all the theories of his predecessor orientalists about the Qur'ân and also built upon the theories of Bell.(2) To support Bell's assumption that the Prophet initially claimed to have seen Allah, Watt quotes and grossly misinterprets 'Urwah's report about the coming of *wahy* and also misinterprets *sûrat al-Najm*, devoting a special section on the so-called "Satanic verses". To support the view that the Qur'ân emanated from the Prophet himself, Watt advances a theory of "intellectual locution", and misinterprets the term *ummiyy* to prove that the Prophet knew reading and writing. Watt also strongly advocates the theory of Judaeo-Christian borrowings and enlarges it by adding to it a new dimension of what he calls the environmental influence on the Prophet. Shortly after the publication of his *Muhammad at*

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(1) See *supra*, p. 18.

(2) See specially chapters II and III of his *Muhammad at Mecca.*

Mecca, Watt published an assessment of Bell's dating of the Qur'ânic passages[(1)]. In 1969 he consolidated his views about the Qur'ân and Qur'ânic *wahy* in his *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World*.[(2)] Almost simultaneously he edited and enlarged Bell's *Introduction to the Qur'ân* which was published the following year.

Watt's above-mentioned work may be said to mark the end of the modern period of orientalist study of the Qur'ân which started in the middle of the nineteenth century. As an epilogue to this period one may mention John Burton's *The Collection of the Qur'ân*, which was published by the Cambridge University Press in 1977. Burton builds upon the Goldziher-Schacht assumption that the reports and *hadîth* literature in general are fabrications of the second and third Islamic century and on the Bell-Watt assumptions that the Prophet had made a "collection" of the revelations, some "revised" and some "unrevised", and that the reports about the collection of Qur'ân are manipulated in order to give 'Abû Bakr and 'Umar (رضي الله عنهما) the main credit and to 'Uthmân a subsidiary role. With these assumptions Burton blends his own theory of *naskh*. He says that the Prophet himself had compiled the Qur'ân; but later Muslim jurists "forged" the concept of *naskh* in order to justify certain *fiqh* positions and also forged certain verses in support of their views and held that these verses once formed part of the Qur'ân but were abrogated. Burton further says that Muslim jurists, in order to justify their theory of *naskh*, also claimed that the Prophet could not have compiled the Qur'ân in his lifetime because *naskh* of any *'âyah* could occur at any time as long as he lived; and since he could not have compiled the Qur'ân, it must have been done by his Companions. Hence arose the "forged" narrations about the compilation of the Qur'ân. Initially, the role was given to 'Uthmân (رضي الله عنه), but as he became unpopular, the credit of initial compilation was given to 'Abû Bakr and 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) and a lesser role was assigned to 'Uthmân (رضي الله عنه).[(3)] This motive of proving the validity of *naskh*, further emphasizes Burton, "induced the Muslims to exclude their Prophet from the history of the collection of their Qur'ân text. It was a compelling motive. It was their

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(1) Watt, "The dating of the Qur'ân: A Review of Richard Bell's theories", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*,London, 1957, pp. 46-56.

(2) Published by the Edinburgh University Press, 1969.

(3) J. Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'ân*, pp. 230-234.

only motive."[1]

It is of course a fact that some later Muslim writers state that the Qur'ân could not have been compiled during the Prophet's lifetime because *naskh* could take place at any time during his life. But it is to be noted that this statement is neither the Prophet's nor that of his Companions. It is merely the opinion of such writers who intend to justify the fact of the compilation of the Qur'ân after the Prophet's death, *not to suppress* the fact of his having compiled the Qur'ân nor to sustain the theory of *naskh.* It is further to be noted that whatever the implication of the concept of *naskh*, it has its root in the Qur'ân itself.[2] It thus really betrays a lack of knowledge of the Qur'ân to make such a bold and unfounded assertion that the theory of *naskh* was forged by later Muslim jurists.

III. The Latest Period: Plunge Into Self-deception

(a) *The Revisionists' fallacies*

The very year in which Burton was thus suggesting that it was the Prophet himself, and not his Companions, who compiled the Qur'ân, there appeared a work by another orientalist which, working on the same Goldziher-Schacht assumptions about *hadîth* literature, went to the other extreme of suggesting that it was neither the Prophet nor his Companions who compiled the Qur'ân but that it came into being much later than the coming into being of Islam and the Muslims, i. e., in the second century of Islam. This was J. Wansborough's *Qur'ânic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (1977).[3] He followed it up by another work, published the following year, entitled The *Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (1978). These publications may be said to have ushered in the latest period of orientalist study of the Qur'ân.

Wansborough represented a new generation of orientalists who set out to cast doubt on the whole course of Islamic history and are hence known as the "revisionists". By employing what is called the "instruments and techniques" of biblical criticism such as "form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism" etc., Wansborough

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(1) *Ibid.,* p. 232.
(2) See Q. 2:106.
(3) Oxford, 1977.

advanced mainly the following assumptions:

(a) That different parts of the Qur'ân originated in different communities located not in Arabia but in Iraq and Syria and that these evolved only gradually from originally independent prophetical traditions ("prophetical logia") during a long period of oral transmission, assuming their final and "canonical" form in the late second/eighth century.

(b) That this development took place in a "sectarian milieu" in which Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and the Believers hurled ideas and claims against one another until these groups had clearly delineated their confessional, theological and ritual boundaries.

(c) That this "canonization" of the Qur'ânic text was linked with the rise of Classical Arabic and its grammar and the appearance of the Qur'ânic commentaries.

(d) That the Islamic tradition is an example of what is known to biblical scholars as "salvation history": "a theologically and evangelically motivated story of a religion's origins invented late in the day and projected back in time," the whole process being similar to that of the canonization of the Hebrew scripture. Taking Schacht as his authority, Wansborough further states that the Qur'ân did not serve as a basis for Muslim law before the ninth century.

Concurrent with the appearance of Wansborough's works, there appeared another highly controversial work prepared along similar lines by Patricia Crone and Michael Cook under the title *Hagarism: The making of the Islamic World* (1977). Crone and Cook admit that they did not say much about the Qur'ân in their book that was not based on Wansborough. The latter's conclusions, however, immediately elicited sharp criticism even by a number of orientalists, some of whom describe his work as "drastically wrongheaded", "ferociously opaque" and a "colossal self-deception". In fact it is simply a high-sounding nonsense; and the whole manoeuvre is indeed a plunge into self-deception. "His awkward prose-style, diffuse organization" and "confused presentation", observes one critic, "makes grasping his basic points all the more difficult."(1) Wansborough relies on a series of assumptions and suggestions rather than on straight arguments; and these can be refuted

(1) Frederick M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Princeton, 1998, p. 38.

by general arguments.

Despite the obvious absurdity of Wansborough’s views, others were affected by his fallacies. Notable among them are J. Koren and Yahuda d. Nevo. They undertook to supplement Wansborough’s theories by archaeological evidence and thus to dismantle the sources of Islamic history. In a joint article they postulated that it is "necessary to corroborate a view derived solely from the Muslim literary account" by the "hard facts" of material remains; "and where the two conflict the latter should be preferred"; and that if there is no evidence for an event outside the "traditional account", this should be taken as a "positive evidence in support of the hypothesis that it did not happen."(1) They further state that excavations carried out in the Central Negev have revealed some thirty pagan sites which correlate with the description of the Jâhilî pagan sanctuaries in the Muslim literary sources. From this they conclude that the accounts of the Jâhilî pagan religion in the Hijaz could well be back-projections of a paganism actually known from later and elsewhere. Elaborating these views in another article, Nevo states that the study of a number of early Arabic inscriptions from the Negev and elsewhere suggest the existence of a generic monotheism as well as a Judaeo-Christian environment in the Negev. "From the fact that the Qur’ân contains many phrases present in the Muslim inscriptions of the second century A. H. and later", concludes Nevo, "it was canonized quite late, i. e., after these phrases had entered the religious vocabulary."(2)

Clearly this Koren-Nevo theory is a reiteration in a different form of the Goldziher-Schacht-Wansborough view about the sources of Islamic history with the exception that, while Wansborough guards his assumption by the safety phrases that it is "tentative and emphatically provisional", Koren and Nevo take it as an established fact. And just as the extreme views of Goldziher, Schacht and Wansborough elicited sharp criticisms from members of their own rank, so have the views of Koren and Nevo come under attack by the more reasonable of the orientalists. Thus, for instance, Stella Whellan squarely joined issue with them in an article under the title "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early

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(1) J. Koren and Y. D. Nevo, "Methodological Approaches of Islamic Studies". *Der Islam*, Band 68, Haft I, pp. 91-102.

(2) Y. D. Nevo, "Towards a Pre-History of Islam", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 17, 1994, pp. 125-126.

Codification of the Qur'ân".[1] She points out three kinds of historical evidence, namely, the Umayyad inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock, al-Walîd's inscription at the Great Mosque at Madina and the information about the existence of a group of Qur'ân copyists at Madina since the middle of the first century of Islam. Another scholar, F. M. Donner, points out that Yehuda Nevo's argument is circular. "The absence of specifically Qur'ânic or Muslim phraseology from the generic monotheism of the earliest Negev texts ... may be taken as evidence for the late codification of the Qur'ân only if we knew that the Qur'ânic texts crystallized in this region (i.e., the Negev, or at least geographical Syria) rather than somewhere else, such as Arabia; but the crystallization of the Qur'ân outside Arabia is another of Nevo's (and Wansborough's) assumptions, not a known fact."[2]

(b) *The San'â' find and renewed speculations*

Meanwhile the discovery of a stock of old parchment manuscripts containing Qur'ânic manuscripts in the loft of the Great Mosque at San'â' gave rise to fresh speculations about the history and textual integrity of the Qur'ân. The discovery was made in 1972; but it was early in the eighties that the Yamani Antiquities Authority, particularly its president Qâdî Ismâ'îl al-Akwa', invited through the German Foreign Ministry two German experts, Dr. Gerd. R. Puin and H. C. Graf von Bothmer, for the restoration and preservation of the manuscripts. They worked at San'â' for some years in this project. It appears that besides being experts in restoration and preservation of manuscripts they had "orientalist" motives; for, it is reported that Bothmer made microfilm copies of some 35,000 sheets of manuscripts and took them to Germany. In 1987 he wrote an article on these manuscripts mentioning, among other things, that one of them, no. 1033-32, could be assigned a date in the last quarter of the first *hijrî* century. More orientalist in nature was the article which Puin wrote under title: "Observations on the Early Qur'ân Manuscripts in San'â'."[3] These writings attracted the attention of the orientalists to the San'â' manuscripts and they held a seminar at Leiden in 1998 on "Qur'ânic Studies" at which both Bothmer and Puin

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(1) *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 118, no. 1, 1988, pp. 1-14.

(2) F. M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Princeton, 1998, p. 62.

(3) Published in Stefan Wilde (ed.), *The Qur'ân as Text*, E. J. Brill. Leiden, 1996, pp. 107-111.

delivered lectures on the San‘â’ manuscripts.

It is not known what exactly they said there on the subject; but in the above mentioned article Puin stresses three things. First, he refers to the attempts made previously by the orientalists like Jeffery, Pretzl, Spitaler and Fischer to collect the existing manuscripts of the Qur’ân with a view to preparing what they call a revised version by comparing any differences in them and regretfully mentions that the very large number of manuscripts collected for the purpose at the university of Munich, Germany, were destroyed by bombing during the Second World war.(1) He then expresses the hope that the San‘â’ find offers an opportunity to resume that project. Second, he mentions what he has been able to note the "discrepancies" in the San‘â’ manuscripts, such as the writing of the letter *’alif* (*hamzah*) in an incorrect way, the numbering of the *’âyahs* in some *sûrahs*, and the order or *sûrahs* written on a couple of sheets. Third, he recognizes that these "discrepancies" are minor and they would not probably lead to any sudden and significant advance in the field of Qur’ânic studies. Nonetheless he asserts that the Qur’ân, though it claims to be "clear" (*mubîn*) is not so and that the existence of the above mentioned "discrepancies" show that the *sûrahs* of the Qur’ân were not written down in their final form during the lifetime of the Prophet and that it is probable that a Qur’ân with a different order of the *sûrahs* was in circulation for a long time.

It is to be pointed out that these statements and conclusions are far-fetched and totally untenable; but they gave rise to wide speculations among the orientalist enthusiasts. One of them, Toby Lester, held a telephonic conversation with Puin on the subject and then put forth a heavy-weight journalistic article in the January 1999 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* under titled "What is the Qur’ân?"(2) The article was made up of three types of materials: (a) information about the San‘â’ find and the conclusions said to have been arrived at by Puin and Bothmer; (b) assumptions of the other orientalists like Wansborough, Cook, Crone,

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(1) See *Supra*, p. 22.
(2) *The Atlantic Monthly*,1999, pp. 43-56.

Nevo and J. Bellamy about the Qur'ân and (c) indications about what the orientalists are doing or proposing to do in the field of Qur'ânic studies, specially the preparation of a Qur'ânic Encyclopedia.

Reference has already been made to the works of Wansborough, Cook, Crone and Nevo. As regards J. A. Bellamy, he is also somewhat influenced by "revisionism" in as much as he conceives copyists' errors in the Qur'ân needing corrections. In a series of articles written between 1991 and 1996 and published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*(1) he examines some twenty-two difficult words and expressions in the Qur'ân which he thinks are mistakes due to errors committed by copyists or mistakes in the originals from which, according him, parts of the Qur'ân were drawn. Therefore he suggests emendations of these words and expressions, understandably by the orientalists themselves. The words and expressions dealt with by Bellamy have been explained and interpreted by both classical commentators and modern lexicographers. He has disregarded these explanations and interpretations and have drawn his conclusions on faulty understanding or misinterpretations of them. (2)

Similar in nature are the compilations entitled *Approaches to the Qur'ân*, edited jointly by G. R. Hawting and K. A. Shareef and published in 1993, and Kenneth Cragg's *The Event of the Qur'ân: Islam in its Scripture*, published in 1994. To the same category belong the works of Andrew Rippin. He appears to have made his debut in the field of Qur'ânic studies by writing an article published in 1985 under the title "Literary Analysis of the Koran, Tafsir and Sira: The Methodologies of John Wansborough".(3) In general Rippin endorses the skepticism and

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(1) J. A. Bellamy, "Al-Raqîm or al-Ruqûd? A note on *sûrah* 18:9", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1991, pp. 115-117; "Fa-Ummuhu Hâwiyah: A note on *sûrah* 101:9", *ibid.*, 1992, pp. 485-487; "Some proposed emendations to the text of the Koran", *ibid*., 1993, pp. 562-573; "More proposed emendations to the text of the Koran", *ibid*., 1996, pp. 196-204.

(2) See for discussions M. M. Ali, *op. cit*., pp. 316-323.

(3) Published in R. C. Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1985,pp. 151-63, 227-32.

"revisionism" of Wasnsborough and says that he "has marked a path in broad outlines, but the road must still be cleared."(1) By way of "clearing" this road Rippin edited a collection of studies entitled *Approaches to the History of the interpretation of the Qur'ân*, published in 1988. He followed it up by editing two other compilations, *The Qur'ân: Formative Interpretation*, published in 1999, and *The Qur'ân: Style and Contents*, published in 2001. In the same year appeared his solo work: *The Qur'ân and its Interpretative Tradition.*

The twenty-first century opened with the publication of another work similar to Arthur Jeffery's *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân* and C. C. Torrey's *The Commercial-Theological Terms of the Koran*. This new work is *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran* by one Christoph Luxenberg, a pseudonym, who is said to be "a scholar of ancient Semitic languages in Germany".(2) Adopting the line of Wansborough and the "revisionists" in general, Luxenberg attempts to show that parts of the Qur'ân are derived from pre-existing Christian-Aramaic texts that were misinterpreted by later Islamic scholars who are said to have prepared the editions of the Qur'ân now in use. Each of the assumptions contained in this premise is wrong and unsubstantiated. It is nowhere clearly stated or established who prepared the "parts" of the Qur'ân on the basis of pre-Islamic Christian Aramaic texts, and when and where. If later Islamic scholars misinterpreted the parts of the text, why did the Muslims who had hitherto been reading and using the Qur'ân not raise any objections to the alleged misinterpretations? How could later Islamic scholars of a certain period all agree on such alleged misinterpretations? How, again, could any alleged misinterpretation of the text constitute any alteration or edition of it? Luxenberg does not ask himself these questions, let alone advancing any specific evidence on any of these points. Also, the attempt to ascribe Hebrew, Syriac or Aramaic origins of some words or expressions in the Qur'ân is nothing new. In fact Luxenberg's main drive is towards this topic of the so-called foreign vocabulary of the Qur'ân,

(1) Quoted in Ibn Warraq, *op. cit.*, p. 362.
(2) Published by Verlag des Arabische Buch, Berlin, 2001.

together with the supposedly original meanings of such words, with no new fact or argument but only a repetition in effect and different forms of the old and stale Sprenger-Nöldeke assumptions and surmises.

During the past couple of years, the five consecutive volumes of an *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ân,* about the preparation of which Toby Lester made a forecast in his article in 1999, have been published by Georgetown University, Washington, D. C. It is prepared under the general editorship of Jane Damnen McAuliffe. A number of orientalists and others have contributed the different articles in it. The materials represent mostly the views and assumptions so far made by the orientalists regarding the Qur'ân and subjects related to it.

The event of 11 September 2001 and its aftermath also have their effect in the field of Qur'ânic studies. Thus there appeared last year (2004) at least one serious work, *Jihad from Qur'ân to bin Laden* by Richard Bonney, with a foreword by Sheikh Dr. Zaki Badawi.[1] It gives an exposition of the concept of *jihâd* in the Qur'ân and the traditions together with an analysis of the views of scholars and experts on the subject.

The above is a very brief historical survey of the orientalist studies of the Qur'ân. Naturally it has not been possible to notice many other studies, particularly specialist articles published in various learned journals touching a number of subjects relating to the Qur'ân including even particular phrases and expressions in it. As these lines are being penned a conference is being held (10-12 November 2005) at the School of Oriental Studies, University of London on the theme: "The Qur'ân Text, Interpretation and Translation". About fifty scholars, mostly orientalists including some whose works have been mentioned above and belonging to different universities and institutions of Asia, Europe, America and Australia are presenting papers and participating at the conference. The nature and scope of their studies may be gleaned from the broad topics under which the sessions have been arranged. These topics are: Literary Strategy, Translation, Philosophical Approaches, Sufi

(1) Published by Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2004.

Hermeneutics, Tafsir: The Classical Age, Tafsir: The Modern Period, Issues in Hermeneutics, Qur'ân as Text, Qur'ân: Society and Culture, Structure and Style, Literary Use of Qur'anic Material, Textual Mechanics and Law and the Qur'ân.

IV. Epilogue

Because orientalism was conceived and developed as "an instrument of pacific crusade", the constant purpose since the beginning of the orientalist studies has been, with rare exceptions, to "refute" Islam and assail the Qur'ân, particularly to disprove its divine origin, i. e., its having been sent down by God. In general a two-fold strategy has been adopted to attain this purpose, namely, (a) to show that the Qur'ân is a composition of the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) himself and (b) to trace the "sources" of his information.

To bring home the first point, the fact of the Prophet's having been an *'ummiyy*, i. e., bereft of any formal education, has been questioned and doubted, the nature of divine communication (*wahy*) has been analyzed and it has been endeavoured to show that *wahy* emanated from within himself: it was his rhapsodical and trance utterances, his soliloquy or intellectual or imaginary locution, or even his deception! For the same purpose the language, style and doctrines of the Qur'ân have been subjected to meticulous scrutiny, and the theory of the Prophet's having "revised" the text of the Qur'ân from time to time has been advanced. Even the role of the angel Jibrîl as the carrier of *wahy* to him has been denied and wide speculations have been made with respect to the titles *al-Rûh* and *Rûh al-Qudus* given him in the Qur'ân, attempts having been made to show that these titles are coterminous with the Christian concept of the "Holy Ghost". One orientalist has even gone to the length of suggesting that the Prophet was subject to his environmental influences, so much so that he even reproduced the prevailing erroneous notions about the earth and the sky in the Qur'ân! The same objective underlies the "materialistic" and "economic" interpretations of the rise of Islam and the teachings of the Qur'ân.

As regards the alleged "sources" of the Qur'ân, the main emphasis has been on the supposed borrowings from Judaism and Christianity, though Hindu, Zoroastrian, Persian, Hellenistic and other sources have been suggested no less enthusiastically, the only exception being, so far as the present writer is aware, that Confucianism and the ancient Chinese culture have been deprived of any share in the stock of materials in the Qur'ân! Even the works on the "Foreign" vocabulary of the Qur'ân and its

"Commercial-Theological Terms" are intended to supplement the concept of its "sources" and the Prophet’s supposed authorship of it. Also, studies relating to specific concepts and teachings in the Qur’ân, such as "predestination" and "free-will", and the social laws of the Qur’ân, have been designed to demonstrate its supposed "sources" and the Prophet’s authorship of it. In sum, the orientalists’ studies conjure up the Prophet as an extraordinary multilingual scholar with thorough acquaintance with the prevailing religious and philosophical systems, including a knowledge of a number of defunct ancient languages! Inconsistently enough, it has at the same time been suggested that because of his lack of knowledge and education, the Prophet received instructions and information from a number of persons in order to give out the Qur’ân!

As ancillary to this purpose, the history of the text and compilation of the Qur’ân, and its textual integrity, have been subjected to critical analysis and discussion and, beginning with the theory of the Prophet’s having himself composed and compiled the Qur’ân the orientalists have of late ended up with the suggestion that it was not he who did so compose and compile it but that it was composed and compiled some two centuries after him out of his reported "logia" or utterances! They have been led on to this absurd position because of their dependence, rather uncritically, on the Goldziher-Schacht hyper-criticism of the Islamic sources.

The orientalist studies of the Qur’ân and of Islam clearly indicate their wide knowledge; but because their purpose in general is to make people misunderstand rather than understand Islam, their usual method is misinterpretation of the texts, twisting of the facts, generalization on solitary or ambiguous evidence, drawing maximum number of conclusions on minimum number of facts and often baseless assumptions, wide speculations and employment of double standards. As a corollary to these methods many an orientalist advertises his "objectivity" and "impartiality", though what he writes clearly illustrates his subjectivity and prejudice. Criticism of the absurd views and faulty methods of the orientalists has sometimes emanated from members of their own ranks, but with such rare exceptions the above remarks apply to the works of the orientalists in general throughout the ages.

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